

The Epic

A Heroic Tale

Modern Epics

The Incredible Journey

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

Star Wars

The Wizard of Oz

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

What Is an Epic?

An epic is a long story told in elevated language (usually poetry), which relates the great deeds of a larger-than-life hero who embodies the values of a particular society.

- Epics often include elements of myth, legend, folk tale, and history.



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How Were Epics Told?

- Epics were told orally.
 - They followed basic story lines and incorporated formulaic descriptions.
 - Most of the words were improvised to fit a particular rhythm or meter.
- Poets traveled from community to community, singing their stories.
 - Longer stories, such as the *Odyssey*, were probably told over a period of several days.

Homer's Epics

- Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the best-known epics in Western civilization.
- All epic poems in the Western world owe something to the basic patterns established in these two epics.
 - The *Iliad* is the primary model for the epic of war.
 - The *Odyssey* is the model for the epic of the long journey.



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Characteristics of Epics

Epics usually include

- a physically impressive hero of national or historical importance
 - Odysseus is a war hero.
- a vast setting involving much of the known physical world and sometimes the land of the dead as well
 - During his journey home, Odysseus travels to several locations and even visits the underworld.

Characteristics of Epics

Epics usually include

- action such as a quest or journey taken in search of something of value
 - Odysseus is trying to return home to his wife and son.
- evidence of supernatural forces at work
 - Greek gods, goddesses, monsters, and other characters from Greek mythology play an important role in the *Odyssey*.

Characteristics of Epics

Epics usually include

- glorification of the hero at the end
 - Odysseus restores order to his house and is welcomed home by his wife and family.
- rootedness in a specific culture and society
 - The *Odyssey* reflects the beliefs and values of the culture of ancient Greece.

What Have You Learned?

1. Epics were told orally.

a. true

b. false

2. The *Odyssey* is the model for the epic of

a. war

c. the long journey

b. romance

d. the battle between good and evil

3. Epics relate the great deeds of

a. a larger-than-life hero

c. a god or goddess

b. an ordinary person

d. a traveling storyteller

The End